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574 628 Faleh bin 'Asmir, a Mutairi of the Mu'aha branch of the 'Ilwa, whom I have known for several years and with whom I have spent many a pleasant evening in the desert, has from time to time told me many stories relating to Arab hospitality. Among other things, he detailed the duty of guests towards their host which I recorded in my notes on 7th January, 1935.

Not only, said he, is there a binding duty of the host towards his guest, but such guest, so long as his host's salt (*milah*) is in his stomach (*fi batnihu*)—which is always assumed to be three days and three nights—is responsible that no harm comes to the host from the guest's tribe. For example, A was the host of B, who quite casually and as an ordinary traveller, had stopped at A's tent and spent the night (*nawalh andih*). Next day B left A's tent (second day) and went his way. On the third day A's tent was attacked by raiders from B's tribe, and five camels and one mare were carried off. A then had a rightful claim against B and was able through B's intervention to recover his lost camels and mare.

In practice A would follow B to his tribe, however far away, and would lay his claim before him, or if B's tribe were not on a friendly footing with A's tribe, A would send a neutral messenger to B, and demand satisfaction.

Not only would B be in honour bound to make complete restitution, but he would have the whole of his tribe behind him if it were necessary to coerce the raiders who had harmed A's camp and stolen the camels. On top of the restitution to A, "honour" money or "honour" camels, would have to be paid to B. That is, the raiders would have to give an extra camel or two to B as compensation for having, so to speak, broken the salt bond between the two men.

SANCTITY OF WOMEN

562 587 586 In the desert the position of women is a far freer and happier one (if we except the hard life and privation that is their lot), than that of their Arab sisters of the town. It is true that they are frequently divorced. Such divorces, however, are not over-serious. Perhaps there is incompatibility of temper, or perhaps the wife has failed to serve up a tasty dinner for her husband and lord. It matters little.

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If she is pretty, attractive and the daughter of So-and-So, she will easily find a dozen other men ready to marry her. 562 587

As for her children: she retains the small ones till they reach the age of eight, and then hands them over to their father's care, but they are never far from her, and are allowed to come and see her as often as they like. Nay, if she is a clever girl she will keep on quite friendly terms with her former husband, and call and see his new wife regularly. That is quite common practice. 586

Where the Badawin housewife has distinctive rights, is in the management of the tent; she is *um al 'aiyāl* (mother of the family) as well as *raiyat al bait*. She holds the honour and good name of her husband in the hollow of her hand. Upon her falls the duty of providing for the guest, of cooking choice and tasty dishes, of turning out good *leben*, and generally bringing the good name of her husband into prominence among his fellow Arabs. 562 462

The mistress of the house never sees or mixes with stranger guests, but she knows all that is going on, for only a curtain partition separates the women's from the guest's quarters. 562 674

The personal name of the lady of the house is never mentioned by the guest, or even by the host's men friends, she is *Um al 'Aiyāl* or *Raiyat al Bait* only. Should a friend wish to ask after a man's wife, he will merely say to the husband, *Kaif hal illi warrak?* or *Shlaun um al 'aiyāl?* ("How is she who is behind you?" or "How is the mother of the children?"). Unpleasant badinage is taboo.

Even more carefully guarded and shielded are a man's marriageable daughters. They are never seen at all, except by those on very intimate terms.

Jokes about a man's getting married, and so forth, are quite common, and the young Lothario about to get spliced is always the butt of his companions, but never is the woman's name brought into this form of rough chaff. That would be *'aib* (a shameful thing). 562 522

The sanctity of a woman and her good name is most immediately apparent in cases of war or hostilities between two tribes. 562 726

She it is who encourages her menfolk to go forth and fight bravely for her and come back triumphant. She it is, if the tribe has to be rallied, who uncovers her face, lets down her hair, and mounts the *mahāl* of the tribe wildly to encourage the young and old men to

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not done. He must approach her through her father. He can and does, however, propose in person to a widow or a divorced woman.

After marriage the Badawin takes his bride to the tent he has previously pitched for her, close to that of her father, and consummation takes place. Many are the curious eyes and ears which are concentrated on the bridal tent.

As with us, those chiefly interested in the marriage ceremony are the other women of the camp.

Slaves marrying go through the same ceremonies as the freeborn, the master and mistress of the slave acting the part of the parents of the bridegroom: and as much interest is evinced in the marriage of one of their slaves as in that of one of the family.

The Badawin's love for cohabitation is well known, and as I have said elsewhere, sex is to him the supreme joy of life. Both bride and bridegroom indulge riotously in this honeymoon period. So wildly passionate is their love-making that I have known of a man breaking two of his wife's ribs on the first night of their marriage. As soon as the wife finds herself with child, she lets the other women know about it, and it becomes the occasion for much rejoicing. She continues cohabiting with her husband as a matter of course till just before the baby's birth.

DIVORCE

Divorce procedure is simplicity itself. The man need only say to his wife before witnesses that he does not want her any more. He has to make the statement *three times* for it to be valid: *Ma arid ich, ma arid ich, ma arid ich.* No disgrace attaches to the woman, who takes the matter quite philosophically, and proceeds to look for another husband.

If the man divorces the woman, she keeps the *jehaz* he has given her, which is sufficient provision for her for a considerable time, or till she gets a second husband. It must not be forgotten that she has nearly always invested her *jehaz* in buying a camel or some sheep and has thus become an owner of livestock.

The point to emphasise is that no disgrace whatsoever clings to divorce, and if the girl is fair, or was the wife of a big shaikh, there is

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587 keen competition among the other young men to marry her. This especially is the case if the girl has character and is famed among men.

Al Jazi, sister of Khalid al Hithlain (Zib Salman), paramount Shaikh of the 'Ajman in 1935, is a case in point. She was good-looking, young and very desirable, but she above all had a will of her own, and was a veritable "Shaikhah". She thought nothing of giving away a camel to one of her poorer 'Ajman brethren who needed one, and kept open *mudhif* when her brother was away. She married the following well-known personages in the order mentioned, and be it noted she was three times the wife of His Majesty 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud, who on each occasion got her then husband to divorce her in return for a handsome camel present, on the excuse that *Khatri ma zal min her* (I have not got over my love for her):

(1) 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud (King).
(2) Sa'ud al Azafa al Sa'ud (King's brother-in-law).
(3) 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud (King).
(4) Rakan al Hithlain, son of Dhaidan al Hithlain ('Ajman).
(5) 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud (King).
(6) Bandar al Dowish, paramount Shaikh of Mutair 1930.
(7) Mathog al Jabe'a, a Shaikh of Mutair.

She had a child by each husband except al Hithlain.

The system means that pretty nearly every woman, by the time she is thirty years old, has had two or three husbands, some as many as seven or eight. Hence there is no spinsterhood among Badawin, and every woman at one time or another experiences the joys of married life. Thus there is no unmarried woman problem, and no prostitution. Adultery or running away with a lover is extremely rare, and ends usually in the death of the woman at the hands of relatives.

588 Should a wife get angry (*tasir t'alabu*) with her husband, she goes back to her parents and refuses to return to him. He perforce has then to divorce* her; in this case the woman returns her *jehaz*. This is the woman's method of getting rid of a husband who is not wanted; the West could profitably learn a lesson from the Badawin method of marriage and divorce.

If a wife finds she loves another man and no longer desires her

* Unless he can persuade her to return by giving her a fitting or nice present of clothes, a camel, sheep or the like.

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husband, she usually tells him so and asks for a divorce. If the husband has any decency (*shâma*), he will grant her request, provided the other man repays him his *jahâz*, i.e. money he has spent on his wife. This rule does not apply to a first-cousin wife, *bint 'amm*.

In Kuwait town they have the pretty custom, that a bridegroom must, when he gets married, spend seven days with his wife in her parents' house. This applies also to the Kuwait tribes proper. The idea is to make things easy for the wife, who usually is filled with shame and nervousness. Among the Kuwait 'Arabelar or local tribesmen, a marriage is arranged and settled as follows:

"A" wants to marry. He expresses his desire to his womenfolk, who look round and suggest a likely bride in such and such a tent. "A" then sends them over to see the girl's mother, and to discuss the matter. If the mother is willing, she sends the women off to the girl's father, and to him they propound the idea also. The father then says what he is willing to accept as his daughter's *jahâz* and the money is paid over. Haggling does not take place in such matters, for if "A"'s deputies do not agree to the amount of the *jahâz* they simply say "nothing doing", and go back to their tent.

Things having been settled and the prospective bridegroom informed, "A" sends for a *mutaʿawwil* (priest) and also summons the girl's father. The marriage is then solemnized, the father of the girl being her proxy. The priest gets Rs.2 as his fee.

Up to this time the girl quite possibly, in fact usually, knows nothing of what is going on or being arranged for her. The first news she gets is from her mother, who tells her to prepare for the marriage-bed that night. Great excitement ensues and often much reluctance. When the girl is ready and everything properly arranged, usually by the same evening, the bridegroom is escorted to the bride's tent, or more usually to a small tent set apart near that of the parents. He is made to sit down and receive his men friends for about an hour. When they have all gone, his own women relatives and those of the bride bring the girl to the tent, clustering round her to prevent her escaping, as she must pretend to want to do. Having put her into the tent, whose sides (*rugg*) are all closed, they shout out to "A" to arise and take possession of the girl of his choice, and then discreetly retire. The girl usually attempts to bolt after the women, or get out by

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over the four feet, etc. Only at dawn do these women "spoil-sports" withdraw to the outer room, after locking the bride and bridegroom up in one stifling room together. Later, when the bridegroom craves to come out, they open the door and go in and wash the bride all over, change her clothes, and redress her for a fresh visit of the bridegroom. This takes place a couple of hours after (see Hamda's sister's marriage in Kuwait on 4th July, 1935).

Amsha, the pretty married daughter of Ibrahim al Muxiyin of Riyadh, told me on 12th July, 1935, that the Arabs had a saying that: "A woman was like a *jirba* (leather bag) of dates; when full, she was useful in more ways than one, when empty she was of no further use and could be thrown away", referring to the uselessness of a woman who could no longer bear children. In throwing her away the husband casually said, *kafuthi wa nafuthi*, i.e. "You can go, but I keep any children you have had".*

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS AMONG IRAQ TRIBES

A bride's trousseau consists entirely of household effects: cooking utensils, pillows, cushions, blankets, *iqwa*, *hakaf*, bridal-bed and, of course, new clothing for herself. The bride never brings such things as a horse or mare to her husband, though I have heard Europeans say she does. Her purchase money is usually sent to her father by the prospective bridegroom a fortnight or month before the marriage. Among the Iraq tribes this money is almost invariably handed over to the daughter, with an additional sum from the father himself. Aided, of course, by her mother and female relatives, the daughter then converts the money into jewellery. The cost of an Iraq tribal girl is usually in the vicinity of Rs.200; the price of a shaikh's daughter varies, but does not as a rule run to more than Rs.1,500. As in the desert, a man if he possibly can always marries his cousin. She is supposed to be his from the day she is born. The Su'adun Shaikhs of the Muntafiq (Euphrates) often keep their female cousins single till the day of their death, in order to keep property in the family. It is an unpleasant habit, and is widely condemned by other Arabs.

* A woman who has been divorced may not re-marry till after three lunar months—or, as the Bedawin put it, *Min ba'ad shahrah hamrah wa shahrah gamrah*. This is to ensure that she is not with child by the man who divorces her.

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834 removes the *burqe* or mask from his bride's face on the first night.
291 She invariably tries to keep it on for about ten days or so out of modesty. His Majesty Bin Sa'ud, however, told the writer that he had had, he supposed, some four hundred wives during his life, but had never seen the face of any one of them. He presumably referred to his many Badawin brides, whom he married usually for a night or two, and then divorced them. This is a custom common among important shaikhs, and involves no disgrace at all to the girl or to the
586 man. Should a child result from these one-or-two-night marriages, the shaikh or big man gives the mother a salary till the child is four or five years old, and then the child is taken away from the mother and placed in the father's house. During this nursing period the mother must not marry. If she does, the child is at once taken away and given to a wet nurse. The Al Sa'ud, Al Subah, Al Khalifah princes regularly go in for such alliances among their Badawin subjects, but usually take away at an early age any children that may be born.

515 Both man and woman must have a complete bath after sexual
833 intercourse. This is a precept of religion, and the wildest Badawin must conform to this rule. Even though only a small bowl of water may be available, the whole body must be washed all over.*

941 During her monthly periods a woman is forbidden to have inter-
515 course with her husband for full seven days. When the menstrual period is over, a woman is unclean until she washes all over; this is called "washing her hair" (*ghusul al ras*).†

833 During Ramadhan (the annual thirty-day fast) sexual intercourse is forbidden by day, but not by night.

It is no exaggeration to say that sexual intercourse is loved by the ordinary Arab above all pleasures in the world. It is the one great pleasure common to rich and poor alike, and the one moment of forgetfulness in his daily round of troubles and hardships that Badawin or townsman can enjoy. Men and women equally love the act, which is said to keep man young, "just like riding a mare".

The Arab seems to possess strength above the average for sexual

* Prayer of a woman after sexual intercourse when performing ablutions: *Ashhadu alla Muhammad wa ali Muhammad rasulul-aghali an il jannati fi hadha al waq al jari bayda 'Illah ta'ali.*

† When a girl reaches womanhood, she is said to be "Now washing her head".

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for the purpose. The mother lived, and her father personally thanked me for lending the mare and saving his daughter. In the absence of my mare a similar request for the loan of my horse was made (25th August, 1937). Unfortunately in this case the patient died.

The rights of a Badawin father over his children are absolute; the mother has practically no rights. Should a man divorce his wife, the sons usually go with the father and the girls with the mother. Should the children be infants, the mother keeps them until they can fend for themselves, and then the father comes and takes them away. (The age in the case of boys is eight.) This removal of a son by his father is the cause of much heartrending grief at times, but is universally practised.

The children thus taken away from their mother live with their father and are brought up by their stepmother. They have the right of visiting their own mother's tent at stated intervals, usually once a week. In a tribe camped together the hardship is not great, but when a man has married a woman from another tribe, the rule causes much unhappiness, as the woman usually goes back to her people, who may be several hundreds of miles away; and she rarely sees her children again.

Among the Al Sa'ud, Al Subah, etc., it is a common custom to have as wives two or three Badawin lasses at a time, who always remain camped with their own people. When a child is born to one of these desert-dwelling wives it is usually taken right away and brought up in the shaikh's household in Kuwait or Riyadh. It is not considered fitting that the offspring of one of the ruling family, even if the mother is of noble tribal birth, should be left to grow up in tribal surroundings. This feeling is particularly strong if the child is a boy.* As a matter of fact, in such alliances the wife is early divorced and pensioned off with a handsome present. This marrying of tribal girls in addition to the "Queen", who is always a lady of the ruling family, is a normal and accepted practice among the ruling classes in Arabia. It is a method of showing honour to a tribe, and brings useful alliances in its train. Tribal shaikhs, on the other hand, usually content themselves with one wife.

* This does not run counter to the age-long custom among the nobility of Arabia of sending their sons into the desert to be brought up by the Badawin in order that they may acquire hardihood.